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BOOK REVIEWS.

SOME INTRODUCTORY LATIN BOOKS.

The Elements of Latin. By W. R. HARPER AND I. B. BURGESS. New York: American Book Co. Pp. 320.

A Beginners' Book of Latin. By H. TUELL AND H. N. FOWLER. Boston: Benj. H. Sanborn & Co. Pp. xi + 288. Price, \$1.

First Year Latin. By W. C. COLLAR AND M. G. DANIELL. Boston: Ginn & Co. Pp. xiv + 311.

The First Year of Latin. By W. B. GUNNISON AND W. S. HARLEY. New York: Silver, Burdett & Co. Pp. x + 319.

First Year Latin. By W. W. SMITH. New York: William R. Jenkins. Pp. viii + 365.

Easy Steps in Latin. By MARY HAMER. New York: American Book Co. Pp. 182.

Introduction to Caesar. By M. L. BRITTAINE. New York: American Book Co. Pp. 171.

A New Gradation. By M. C. SMART. Boston: Benj. H. Sanborn & Co. Pp. vii + 157.

WHETHER the production of so many introductory Latin books each year is due to the enterprise of publishers, the ambition of editors, the needs of schools, or the inherent impossibility of reaching finality in the methods of presenting Latin to beginners, or to all of these, is a question not easily answered. One thing clear is that the teacher is more than the text-book. The books here received differ very considerably in treatment, yet almost every one of them would prove effective in the hands of a painstaking and capable teacher, while no one of them would yield satisfactory results to the wooden teacher who merely hears recitations. And there are perhaps few really competent teachers of experience who could not plan an introductory book that, *in their hands*, would prove more effective than any yet issued. After all, the text-book best administered is best.

Most of these books were issued after the warning given by Professor Bennett in *The Teaching of Latin and Greek in Secondary Schools*, that the writers of beginners' books in Latin have for a decade or two been far advanced on the *descensus Averni*, but none of them show signs of having profited by his strictures. In particular, he has failed apparently to convince the editors that the order of topics in which reflective analysis arranges the formal grammar of a language is likewise the proper order to adopt in teaching the actual use of that language to a young beginner. If ineffective scrappiness were inevitable in the prevailing method, Professor Bennett's contentions must be accepted; in reality he has called attention, not to an inherent

fatal defect, but to a very real danger which everyone, whether writer or teacher, who uses this method must guard against at every turn. . But instead of being content with warning us, in shunning Scylla, not to fall into Charybdis, Professor Bennett has sought to prove that Charybdis is so frightful that we should hasten back to Scylla's embrace.

The first book, *The Elements of Latin*, by Harper and Burgess, is virtually a revision, suggested by the experience and criticism of a decade, of the *Inductive Latin Primer* published in 1891. The present work does not begin at once with the text of Cæsar. Sixteen preliminary lessons serve to introduce a large number of the forms and constructions most commonly met with. The text, too, is the comparatively easy *Invasion of Britain*, and this, moreover, is at first somewhat simplified. It is open to question whether these changes, including as they do the admission that with so difficult a language as Latin it will not do to plunge young lads at once into the intricacies of Cæsar, do not undermine the logical basis on which the whole structure is reared. The final appeal must be to experience. Do sixteen or sixty preliminary lessons answer better? The reviewer cannot but think that admirably as the theory is worked out in this much-improved revision, the danger remains that chaos in the beginners' Latin class can be avoided only by a degree of vigilance and patience on the teacher's part which must prove exhausting, and by a power on the pupil's part to grasp, retain, and correlate intricate and complicated masses of material, which few young pupils possess. When, moreover, the order of presentation of topics is governed by no deeper principle than haphazard occurrence of a form or usage in a given section of Cæsar, the danger of scrappiness is inevitably increased; nor does the statement in the preface that "every topic when introduced is treated with such fulness that the pupil's knowledge will not seem fragmentary" completely reassure one as to the possible danger of inability to master and assimilate so much bulky and heterogeneous material. Yet there seems no doubt that many teachers succeed best with this method; to such the use of this new book should mean either greater success or at least equal success with less labor.

The next three books are admirable exponents of the style of introductory Latin books that has of recent years come into vogue. The first two are intended for those who will read stories and fables before attacking Cæsar or Nepos; the third is based on and leads up to the *Helvetian War*. In other respects they are of singularly equal and singularly high merit. In this method of presenting Latin there would seem to be many arrangements of topics equally effective; it is no longer true here that the right way is one, the wrong ways are infinite.

Yet, good as they are, these books show how real and how difficult to avoid are the dangers involved in the piecemeal presentation of forms and constructions. Chief among these dangers are the following, all capable of illustration from these excellent books: failure to follow up a newly acquired rule or form by sufficient practice to "think" it; the separation of topics which had far better be brought into close relation; the presentation in one lesson of too great or too varied a mass of topics, tending surely to indigestion, a result which may also ensue from the attempt to absorb too rapidly a subject difficult of assimilation; and the failure to recognize what should be emphasized and what kept in the background. There seems to be difficulty in resisting the temptation to rival the regular grammar in completeness; in a beginners' book merely to know what to omit is in itself a great merit.

Space does not permit detailed illustration, but if one takes such characteristic

difficulties as the ablative absolute, the accusative and infinitive construction, the genitive construction, the subjunctive in indirect questions, the perfect and imperfect as representatives of the English past tense, he will find that they have not always been so treated as to escape the dangers above mentioned.

The book entitled *First Year Latin* is not nearly so prepossessing as those just referred to. There are no illustrations; no continuous reading lessons are interspersed; while the typography and general appearance might be improved. The book, which is based on Cæsar and planned especially for the Regents' examination of New York, follows a plan midway between the types prevailing in England and in the United States. There is, as a rule, plenty of good practice in the well-chosen exercises. The introductory matter before each exercise is, however, generally far too voluminous, and the treatment of the subjunctive is likely to fix in the pupils' minds the idea that it is usually to be rendered by *may*, *might*, or *should*.

Easy Steps in Latin is a most unique little book, intended to facilitate the introduction of Latin into grammar schools, by furnishing "a comfortable introduction to the language, emphasizing its relation to English, and the learning of paradigms rather than the reading of many sentences." There are more ingenious devices in this small volume than in half a dozen ordinary text-books; it is unfortunate that the ingenuity should be so often misdirected. The grammar-school pupil who goes conscientiously and triumphantly through this book will astonish his high-school Latin master equally by his amazing knowledge and his amazing ignorance. The weakness of the book is its appeal to mere memory, and its utter failure to foster the ability to read Latin; its best feature is the constant effort, often most happily successful, to find interesting points of contact between Latin and English.

The *Introduction to Cæsar* follows a plan often used by teachers, but never before, perhaps, systematically worked out and embodied in a book. The knowledge of the paradigms of the noun, adjective, pronoun, and verb is presupposed. Having memorized these, the pupil is gradually introduced to the various usages and constructions of Latin in a series of thirty lessons. These consist of two parts, a portion of Cæsar's story of the *Helvetian War* (at first very much simplified), and a study of syntax. The book contains also a series of sentences for translation into Latin, the paradigms of inflection, and the actual text of the first thirty chapters of Cæsar. The proof-reading of this book might have been more accurate.

The *New Gradation* is a collection of fables and stories (chiefly modern) which have been turned into Latin to furnish material for reading lessons in classes intermediate between the introductory book and Cæsar or Nepos. The tales are well selected and well graded, concluding with Ritchie's excellent "Story of Ulysses." Each reading lesson is followed by sentences for retranslation into Latin, based upon the story just read. These are of doubtful advantage, as they call for no greater alteration of the original Latin text than an occasional change of tense or number. Such exercises call for little or no mental effort, and thus no real power of writing Latin is produced thereby. The book contains also a compendious statement of the rules of syntax, to which helpful references are made from time to time in the reading lessons.

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